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TO · THE · UNBORN · PEOPLES

ELLEN M. H. GATES

413

Gates
NBI

TO
THE UNBORN
PEOPLES

TO THE UNBORN PEOPLES

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ELLEN M. H. GATES

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1910

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The present collection includes a number of poems which appeared in "The Treasures of Kurium," besides several which have appeared in *Harper's Magazine* and elsewhere.

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GO, little book, and ask no meed of praise;
Contented be if now and then you hear
A pleasant word within the crowded maze,
Where men and women toil, and hope,
and fear.

TO THE UNBORN PEOPLES

TO THE UNBORN PEOPLES

YE Peoples of the future years,
  We you salute. To you we fling
From these revolving hemispheres
  A greeting glad. While yet we cling
To earth's old rim, we think of you;
  A watch we keep by day and night,
As plain, in Heaven's unfathomed Blue,
  Your great battalions sweep in sight.

Hail! Hail! to you, ye glorious hosts,
  Ye formless shapes that haunt us now;
Ye gathering tribes, unresting ghosts,
  Behold us here, as low we bow
In salutation to our Kind;
  Our kindred dear, whose blood will be
As red as ours, whose hands will find
  To rooms we found not, door and key.

Ye waiting Ones that bide your time,
  Ye too shall know of joy and pain;
The storms will smite the hills you climb;
  The suns will scorch you on the plain:
The seas will lure you; you will go
  In paths our ships may never find;
On Isles unknown and peaks of snow,
  Your tribes will camp, your horns will
    wind.

Ye unborn Peoples, we have tried
  To march in ranks where none retreat;
In rifts of rocks our records hide,
  And you may find them, when your feet
Shall stand in places where our hands
  Were torn and soiled by thorn and
    grime.
To you we leave the Seas and Lands,
  And all the glorious spoils of Time.

Advancing Races, Sons of men,
  How can ye bear life's awful stress?
What will ye do with sword and pen,
  And good and bad, and more and less?
When all our Prophets go their ways,
  And all our Anthems are forgot,
What Altars will your builders raise
  To Him who lives and changes not?

Ye Legions vast, from depth and height
  We beg from Science chart and proofs,
That you may stand in clearest light,
  And sign to Saturn from your roofs.
The Earth is prescient now with sense
  Of growing power, judicial doom,
Good will to men, Omnipotence
  That whispers low, "Make room! Make
    room!"

Ye Peoples of the future years,
  Keep faith with us, the elder Ones,
Wipe out the causes of our fears,
  Climb nearer to the central Suns.
We go our way, our names will die,
  Ye shall not find them near or far,
Our highest spans in dust will lie
  As low as Karnac's pillars are.

Hail! Hail! ye Peoples yet unborn,
  We leave you all that Love bequeaths;
Our gems and mines and fields of corn,
  Traditions, arts, and Valor's wreaths.
New voices call. We disappear.
  Above our dust your songs will swell;
Your banners float,—Our Kinsmen dear,
  Hail! Hail! and then,—Farewell, Fare-
    well.

DETACHMENT

BE silent! Let them rest;
Why make an endless quest
  For all they said and did?
Why drag into the light
Their moods of black and white,
  These, with their faces hid?

Bind, if you will, in gold,
The tales their fancies told;
  With wonder breathe their names;
But always, from their art,
Leave them in peace, apart,
  As from the ash the flames.

A REGRET

FORGIVE me, my brothers and sisters,
  Little people who live in the grass,
So heedless was I of your presence,
  But now I am crying "Alas!"
Lamenting my deafness and blindness,
  And wishing I better had known
My neighbors, the peaceable creatures
  Whose homes were so near to my own.

I wish I had lingered in passing,
  And lifted the leaves of the field,
And watched you run hither and thither
  In paths which the grasses concealed.
I wish that my fingers had touched you
  And made you look up at a friend,
Though you were so tiny and transient,
  And I—of the world without end!

THE CRY OF THE EARTHLY

TAKE me back, ye elements,
  Take me. Let me be
One with isle and continent,
  Air and fire and sea.

Wide a bridge of light is laid
  Down to earth and back;
Let a path for me be made
  Up its glittering track.

Call to me, ye elements;
  Break the band and bar;
Lure me from the lonesome tents
  Where the breathless are.

Fling my atoms to and fro;
  All their ways control.
Sometime, somewhere, let me know
  Starting-place and goal.

THE CLAIMANTS

A BEE, in the heart of a rose,
  May flutter its wings,
But nothing it guesses or knows
  Of beautiful things.
Should I ask of the bee, "Are they fair,
The roses that swing in the air?"
It would say, "They are suitable meat
For earth's little toilers to eat."

A worm, at the root of a rose,
  Gnaws on in the dark;
It sees not the way that it goes,
  It hears not the lark.
Should I lean from my place in the tower,
To question the worm of the flower,
It would answer, "The rose-tree is made
That worms may live under the shade."

On outermost leaf of a rose,
  As pausing in flight,
A butterfly rests, and it glows
  Like opals at night.
Should I whisper, "Thou gem of the air,
For whom are the roses so fair?"
It would tell me they fell from the sky,
God's gift to his gay butterfly!

MYSELF

MYSELF must cross the bridge that sways
  With half its timbers gone,
Ere I can call to him who stays,
  "Make haste! Come on! Come on!"

THE BODY TO THE SOUL

SAID the body to the soul,
You are Master, you control;
Viewless, coming from afar,
Mystery to yourself you are.

I, of earthly atoms made,
Stand erect, am not afraid;
Must forever, as I run,
Cast a shadow in the sun.

All the worlds are turning round,
We are strangers, outward bound,
Down the roads we do not know,
With our orders sealed we go.

You are awful in your might,
Swift and strong, you feel delight
In the movement of the years,
In the splendor of the spheres.

Strange companionship is ours,
Separate lives and mingled powers;
You will conquer time and death,
In my nostrils is my breath.

Can you tell me when we met?
Know you where our bounds are set?
Can you see the certain line
Where we whisper "mine" and "thine"?

I, your comrade made of clay,
Uncomplaining go or stay;
Kiss your sceptre, fear your frown,
Own your right to wear the crown.

I have fled at your command
O'er the burning wastes of sand;
Heard the icebergs grind and groan
In the lonesome Arctic Zone;

Plunged for you beneath the waves;
Faced the wild beasts in their caves;
Fought your causes on the fields
Where the foeman never yields.

I have wasted 'neath the strain
Of your unacknowledged pain;
If dishonor touched your name,
Cheek and forehead flushed with shame.

When you conquered grief or wrong,
I have sung the victor's song;
In your shining, love-lit hours
I have wreathed myself with flowers.

Now more swiftly drop the sands
Through the hour-glass in my hands,
And more oft I hear you say
I am but the hindering clay.

I arraign you, Sovereign Soul;
I, the slave whom you control,
Face you boldly; you have done
Scarce your part beneath the sun.

He who made you made me too;
In my face His breath He blew;
In my veins, with art divine,
Mixed the blood as red as wine.

Since His hands have fashioned me,
I must unforgotten be;
If you cause me needless pain,
He will hear His dust complain.

Restless, wayward as the wind,
You have suffered, you have sinned,
Urged me onward in your pride,
Beauty fleeing, rest denied.

Oft my lips are parched with thirst,
While you give me drink accurst;
Oft I starve for bread to eat,
While you burn the fields of wheat.

Through his throne-room, may the King
Send his soldiers rioting?
While the workmen humbly toil,
Should the priest the temple spoil?

Sovereign Spirit, back I throw
Blame and failure; I shall go
Unaffrighted to my place,
Undishonored by my race.

You are lonesome, homesick, tost;
You have learned what life can cost;
Leaping upward like a flame,
You will vanish whence you came.

Through my fibres I shall feel
New sensations, I shall reel,
Drooping earthward, be a part
Of old Nature's peaceful heart.

Soul of mine, if e'er you pass
Lake of heaven, as smooth as glass,
Bend above it, you may see
Some transfigured type of me!

THE ARTIST AND HIS ART

WELL the artist loves his art,
Hides it deep within his heart;
Patient with his changeful moods,
It pervades his solitudes.

If he be not swift to go
Where the bugles loudest blow,
In his dream or vision vast,
He will build the things that last.

He must lure, from wood and stone,
Glorious forms to face his own;
Somehow, with a simple pen,
Write the songs that gladden men.

He will capture fleeting shapes;
Show the tree the tempest shakes;
Paint the sacred thought that lies
In the depth of human eyes.

He can make the cities fair,
Lift cathedrals in the air;
Where the arches highest spring,
Send his music thundering.

Yet within the artist's breast
Shall be longing, vague unrest;
Form and color, swift as light,
Will evade him in their flight.

Sometimes, even with his own,
He shall dwell apart, alone;
Dearest friend may fail to guess
Half his joy or loneliness.

Hope may falter, Love may die,
Fame may cease to signify;
But his art will always be
Comrade, guide, "*good companie.*"

TO-MORROW

TO-MORROW, To-morrow, you insolent
shadow,
You torture and tease me and strike at my
soul;
But I shall go forward and leave you behind
me,
A ghost unremembered, when I 'm at the
goal.

A PASSING SOUL

I PRAY you, pause; awhile forget
The trifling things of every day;
For here, as moonlight lingers yet,
A Soul is passing on its way.

Still toils the heart, a faithful thing
That questioned not nor asked for ease;
But now it tires; at life's deep spring
The crimson currents fail and freeze.

The eyes that answered ours so long
  Can see us not—we drift away
Like summer clouds, a transient throng
  Of shapes they looked on yesterday.

Thou passing Soul, so close the clasp
  Of vibrant nerve and surging blood;
'Tis hard to go, to reach and grasp,
  In blinding dark, the hand of God.

What countless cords must broken be,
  What strange adjustments must be made,
Before the prisoned soul is free
  From earth's hard rule and long parade!

New thought invades the darkening brain,
  The lips are stiffening with a smile;
No more the doubt or fear or pain
  Of time's tempestuous little-while.

Ah, look! the face is changing so,
  It seems a stranger's, even now;
A carven face, as cold as snow:
  Before its majesty we bow!

A NAME

WHAT if some night as you walked alone,
  Where waves crept up to a moonlit shore,
There fell at your feet a strange, white stone,
And the name of a friend was writ thereon—
  The name, and nothing more?

And what if the friend were worlds away,
  The name unspoken and half forgot—
The friend you loved in a distant day,
Whose hand, at home, in your fingers lay
  When morn of the midnight whispered not?

And what if the stone, unearthly bright,
  Were quivering as with prisoned flame;
And your heart leapt up with a new delight,
And walls of paradise rose in sight,
  As you kissed the dear old name?

SALVAGE

NOW from the wreckage I arise
  And free my eyes from brine,
And search the shore that near me lies
  For stores that still are mine.
The seas that sucked the vessels down,
  With all their shining freight,
I still defy. They shall not drown
  My soul's untouched estate!

A LITTLE BIRD

I KNOW a little bird that sings
  Its anthem from a slender tower,
Then from a cedar bough it swings
  And seems as fragile as a flower.

I long to hold it in my hand
  And tell it of my passing days;
I wish to make it understand
  How much I love its little ways.

But ah! the bird is wondrous wise;
  It sits superior in its place,
Till something calls it, and it flies
  And flings its shadow in my face.

Up! up it goes! an atom fine
  That knows the secrets of the Blue
And meets with no restraining line
  Among the clouds it passes through.

What thing is this that God has made
  And set between the earth and sky,
So blithe and small, yet unafraid
  Among His thunderbolts to fly?

POVERTY

YOU shall have love—your share of it;
  And honor, too, may be your own;
And gold perhaps, and care of it;
  Yet shall you whisper, when alone:
    Whatever heart may envy me,
    I am as poor as I can be.

UNREST

WE fled away from sea and sod
  To calm us on the ocean's breast,
But all its billows roared to God
  The story of their own unrest.

Among the Arctic rings we thought
  To lose our dreams and vain desires;
More swift than we, their spells were wrought
  Among the leaping northern fires.

The East allured us, old, serene;
  She called our names from sacred glooms;
But mummies passed us, king and queen,
  Borne westward from their rifled tombs.

May nothing rest? The winds awake
  And smite us as we forward strain.
Ah, what is God, that He can make
  The souls that to themselves complain?

He is! He is! the mountains cry.
  He was! He is! repeats the sea.
And Sirius signals from the sky:
  He was, and is, and is to be.

COMPENSATION

If friends who say they love us,
  To-morrow love us not,
The stars are still above us,
  To bless our lonely lot.

If now and then we stumble
  And break a precious cup,
Our hearts may be more humble
  When we have risen up.

If sorrow turn our hair gray,
  And face of want we see,
The priceless mines, I dare say,
  Have gems for you and me.

If there be those who scorn us
  With censure hard to bear,
Their hands may yet adorn us
  With chaplets sweet to wear.

THE DARK

I AM the Dark, the ageless one;
Before the days and years begun,
I hovered, formless, silent, cold,
And filled the void. No page unrolled
Makes mention of my timeless reign;
No rock on mountain-top or plain,
By scar or symbol, now can tell
The secrets that I know so well.

I am the Dark, the first to be;
My own beginning baffles me.
I seemed a thing apart, forgot,
Which was—because the Light was not.
I dwelt with Chaos; place I kept
As atom unto atom crept,
Till Order stood, with sinews set,
And law with law like brothers met.

I am the Dark, for still I stay,
With half my kingdom wrenched away.
There came an hour when all the black,
A filmy screen, was folded back.
Above me, through me, everywhere,
Were scarlet streaks and golden glare;
And mighty winds began to blow
The trailing mist-wreaths to and fro.

I am the Dark. The eye that sees
The midnight moons and Pleiades
Must wait for me. I claim the sky
To show the splendors swinging high
In space so deep, and wide, and black,
That thought itself comes trembling back.
The Sun may show the sea and sod,
But I — the far-off fields of God!

I am the Dark. My paths I keep;
No hour too soon the light may creep
Above the hills, no moment late
The Sun may reach the western gate.
The shadows are my own; their wings
They spread above all breathing things,
Till joy and pain, and more and less,
Are one in sleep's unconsciousness.

I am the Dark. The under-world,
With soundless rivers onward whirled,
Is mine alone; and mine the lakes
O'er which the morning never breaks.
I dwell in caverns, vast, unknown,
Whose walls are wrought from primal stone;
There Silence, Death, and I can wait,—
Creation's grim triumvirate!

I am the Dark, and forth and back,
As God's own servant, robed in black,
I go and come. His dead I keep
Within my chambers while they sleep.
Who knows my doom? Perhaps, at last,
I may be ended, outward cast
From all that is, my deepest night
Invaded by resistless light!

O HELEN, HELEN DEAR![1]

How lightly up the winding stair
  We ran together, she and I;
And still I see her lovely face
Look downward from the landing-place;
For she outsped me. Through the gloom
Of the great hall, into her room,
She led me on that summer day,
  In years that fled too quickly by.

I pray you, if you ever pass
This sunken grave, within the grass,
Touch tenderly the crumbling stone,
And say, for me, in undertone—
  "O Helen, Helen dear!"

How fair she was, how straight and tall,
  My Helen in that far-off day!
Like living things that longed to go,
The curtains fluttered to and fro,

[1] From "The Treasures of Kurium."

As up and down the room we walked,
Perhaps of love and lovers talked,
As girls have always done, and will,
  And nothing whispered "yea" or "nay."

I pray you, if you ever pass
This sunken grave, within the grass,
Touch tenderly the crumbling stone,
And say, for me, in undertone—
  "O Helen, Helen dear!"

What trifling things the heart will keep!
  They seem too simple to be told.
That day she lifted from its place
A dainty thing of flowers and lace,
And held it up that I might see.
O little bonnet, plain to me,
Your ribbon streams across the mist,
  A shadowy streak of palest gold!

I pray you, if you ever pass
This sunken grave, within the grass,
Touch tenderly the crumbling stone,
And say, for me, in undertone—
  "O Helen, Helen dear!"

SLEEP SWEET[1]

SLEEP sweet within this quiet room,
  O thou! whoe'er thou art;
And let no mournful yesterday
  Disturb thy peaceful heart.
Nor let to-morrow scare thy rest
  With dreams of coming ill;
Thy Maker is thy changeless Friend,
  His love surrounds thee still.
Forget thyself and all the world;
  Put out each feverish light;
The stars are watching overhead;
  Sleep sweet,—good night! good night!

[1] From "The Treasures of Kurium."

PRESCIENCE

SOME there are—we know their names—
  On whom Nature sets her seals,
Moves them in her mighty games,
  Somehow to their sense reveals
Secrets that no searcher finds;
  In their hands she lays a thread
That forever winds and winds,
  Underground and overhead.

These are they who feel the whir
  Of the eagles' awful wings,
Ere beyond the cliff they stir
  With resistless winnowings.
Lone are they, the prescient ones;
  'Mid to-day's persistent roar
They behold the couriers run
  From to-morrow's opening door.

When the waiting kingdoms call,
  They can hear the kings reply;
Plain they see the serpent crawl
  Back to Eden's gate to die.
While they wait with lifted hands,
  While they watch with wondering eyes,
You that half-way understand,
  Pray for souls so strangely wise!

BEYOND

BEYOND my close environment,
  To-day's insistent call,
I forward fare, past cave and tent
  And hut and castle-wall.

Shall I—an alien, far from home,
  Unnaturalized—forget
The quest I make, and aimless roam,
  With bounds too near me set?

With skies above me bending down
  To meet the mists that soar,
There 's music somewhere that must drown
  The world's perpetual roar.

To find my Own, across the gray
  Old sea of Time I swim,
And clear my eyes from mist and spray,
  To watch the horizon's rim.

For often now I see afloat
  Some fair, unearthly thing,
And from above a long-drawn note
  Has set me wondering!

WE LOVE BUT FEW[1]

O YES, we mean all kind words that we say
  To old friends and to new;
Yet must this truth grow clearer day by day,
  We love but few.

We love! we love! what easy words to say,
  And sweet to hear,
When sunrise splendor brightens all the way,
  And far and near

Is breath of flowers, and caroling of birds,
  And bells that chime;
Our hearts are light, we do not weigh our words
  At morning-time.

But when the matin-music all is hushed,
  And life's great load
Doth weigh us down, and thick with dust
  Grows all the road,

[1] From "The Treasures of Kurium."

Then do we say less often that we love:
  The words have grown;
With pleading eyes we look to Christ above,
  And clasp our own.

Their lives are bound to ours with mighty
      bands;
  No mortal strait,
Nor Death himself, with his prevailing hands,
  Can separate.

The world is wide, and many names are dear,
  And friendships true,
Yet do these words read plainer year by year,
  We love but few.

THE CUP OF YOUTH

WHAT if some day upon your door
A hand should knock as to implore

Your swift attention, and you rose
With smiling lips, as one who knows

A friend has come, when lo! a face
You ne'er had seen in any place

Should look at you, a hand lift up
Before your eyes a crystal cup

Which held the draught by poets sung,
The water that should make you young;

Make answer, you who moan and weep,
And babble in your troubled sleep,

Would you not whisper, *No! No! No!*
And ask your wondrous guest to go?

DEATH

WHITE and inscrutable, soundless, alone;
Over the beautiful building thy throne,
Stately, victorious, making thy claim;
Over the glorious writing thy name.

Calm, unassailable, fixed in thy seat;
Swords, unavailable, break at thy feet;
Kings in their palaces pale at thy sign;
Deep in their chalices freezes the wine.

Words cannot reach to thee, backward they
come;
Love stands beseeching thee, still thou art
dumb;
Youth in its loveliness, babes of an hour,
Age with its loneliness, all are thy dower.

Thou, when thou findest one worn to the
heart,
Then thou art kindest one, taking his part;
Men their Gethsemanes leave at thy call;
Thou, from their enemies, savest them all.

Sea-beds and mountain-lands, rifts in the
rocks,
Cities and desert-sands shelter thy flocks;
Where the slow glaciers glide; on the white
coasts,
Dreamless, unterrified, slumber thy hosts.

Born of eternities, passionless, veiled,
Fixed with the certainties, thou hast prevailed;
Nearer and nearer thee, we of the sod
Greet thee, not fearing thee, Servant of God.

Greatest of mysteries, Merciful One,
Ending our histories under the sun;
Life, that is kin to thee, smiles in thy track,
Knows she can win from thee all of us back.

Roses we fling to thee, myrtle we twine;
Anthems we sing to thee, honor is thine.
When we must render thee heart-beat and
breath,
Deal with us tenderly, wonderful Death!

"I AM OLD," SAID THE EARTH[1]

"I AM old," said the earth, "I am old,
I am wearied in all my frame;
I am stiff with the northern cold;
I am seared by the southern flame;
I am worn with the ways of men;
Death reaps them down like corn,
They are hid in my breast and then,
Straightway, new men are born.
And their laughter is all in vain,
For they count the days and years;
And they babble of loss and gain,
And they drench me with their tears.
Is there never an end of all?
May a great world never die,
And rest like a mighty ball
In the depth of the awful sky,
Or feel at last in sea and sod
New, quick'ning touch of the hand of
God?"

[1] From "The Treasures of Kurium."

A CRY

THOU! Thou, the Infinite!
  Thou, the eternal One;
Vast, Uncreated;
  Cause of all Causes;
Knowing what Life means;
  Hiding what Death is;—
From the lone silences
  Hear Thou my cry to Thee!

Thou who didst think of me,
  Tracing a path for me;
Thou who didst call to me,
  "Come thou from nothingness!"
Lo! I have answered Thee,
  Look on Thy workmanship!
Show me Thy purposes,
  Why is Thy breath in me?

MY SHADOW[1]

UP and down it follows, follows,
  I can never quite escape;
On the hills and in the hollows,
  This familiar, silent shape
Still is with me, tireless ever;
  Friend or foe—whome'er I meet,
This companion leaves me never,
  Keeping step with soundless feet.

Looking at it I am lonely,
  For a stranger still it seems;
Tho' it follows me—me only,
  Yet as something seen in dreams
I behold it. Oft I wonder
  Whither all its steps must tend;
All its features hidden under
  Veils no changeful wind can rend.

[1] From "The Treasures of Kurium."

Can nor pain nor passion move thee,
  O my comrade? I am tost
By the tempests sent to prove me—
  On thy calm their wrath is lost.
Come thou near, my patient lover,
  Let me whisper that I see—
What no other may discover—
  Change at last has come to thee!

Once thy feet were swift beside me,
  Not a hill too high to climb;
From the heat thou didst not hide thee,
  Naught to thee were space and time;
Light as air I saw thee dancing
  Down the pathway where I strayed—
Dost thou see the night advancing?
  Art thou of the dark afraid?

Canst thou hear me, lover, stranger?
  Silent shape, I tell thee now,
I, thro' safety and thro' danger,
  Am become as changed as thou.
Yet my heart leaps on before me,
  New stars burn within the sky;
Courage! courage! I implore thee—
  O my comrade, faster fly!

THE TREE

I STOOD beside an ancient tree,
  And stroked its bark with tender hand;
Good friends were we; it counseled me,
  Its waving leaves my forehead fanned.
I long had watched the years that rolled,
  But there, beneath an ageless sky,
And under branches centuries old,
  I cried, *Dear God, how young am I!*

A SOUL

SINCE this is a human soul, beware
  And touch it not with a careless hand;
Its life is long, give light and air,
  And let it live as its laws demand.

I pray you look; it is rare and fine,
  An alien flower with an inward glow;
It shrinks away from your dark red wine,
  And slakes its thirst with the dew and
    snow.

It is sad and glad; it is young and old;
  It loves the cyclone and the sun;
It is like a harp with power untold
  That all the winds may play upon.

THE EAGLE'S BROOD

SOME day when the Eagle leaves her nest
  To search the shore for food,
We 'll climb to the mountain's rocky crest
  To gaze at the callow brood.

But we may not stay, and we must beware
  When the Eagle homeward flies,
For we are weak, and we could not bear
  The wrath in the Eagle's eyes.

WONDERMENT

To think that such a one as I,
  Of transient human race,
Should sail with planets lone and high,
  And lift a puzzled face
To gaze on sun and satellite,—
  Ah! have they tree and grass,
And wind and rain, and dear delight,
  And words like our "Alas"?

LOVERS

The white rose and the red rose,
  Either side the garden gate,
Though in love with one another,
  Were so sadly separate,
But when summer-time was ended,
  They no longer were alone,
For their faded leaves together
  On the sodden turf were strown.

LOVE AND HATE

SAID Love to Hate, I shall destroy you yet;
  Around my throne your servitors shall stand
To gaze on me, till they your name forget,
  And you, yourself, shall bid my foes disband.

IN THE FOG

AM I left alone? Has the whole world gone
But the one small spot that I stand upon?
Was there nothing real? Were the hills a
    dream?
Did never the dew of the morning gleam?

I grope in the fog like a blinded man
Who has missed his way. I have lost the plan
Of the world I knew. O where, I pray,
Are the fields I walked in yesterday?

Out there at morn, on a bough, low-hung,
An oriole's nest in the breezes swung;
I turn my eyes to the self-same spot,
But the bough and the bird and the nest are
    not.

Were the Damask rose and the Ivy green
But phantoms cast on a phantom screen?
Were the tinted shells on the sunlit shore
What rainbows are when the storms are o'er?

And the friends I loved—have I lost them all?
In the Fog's assault did their castles fall?
I send their names with a lonesome cry
Through the cold gray wall, but there 's no
reply.

OVER AND OVER

It 's over and over, the breath of clover,
  And rainbows after the rain;
And still forever the seas that sever,
  And unto the stars complain.

To-day and to-morrow, the same old sorrow,
  The same old paths to tread;
And swift thereafter the love and laughter,
  And Joy with its wreaths of red.

It 's over and over that man, the rover,
  Must kindle the lights that fail,
As hither and thither, and God knows
    whither,
  He follows the endless trail.

With hands outreaching, and lips be-
    seeching,
  It 's over and over again;
A miracle story of love and glory,
  With choirs that chant—*Amen!*

LOSSES

IF all the losses of the years,
  The things which you have missed so long,
And mourned with unavailing tears,
  Came trooping back, with dance and song,
And stood expectant at your door,
Say, would you take them back once more?

THE BARS OF FATE

I STOOD before the bars of Fate
And bowed my head disconsolate;
So high they seemed, so fierce their frown,
I thought no hand could break them down.

Beyond them I could hear the songs
Of valiant men who marched in throngs;
And joyful women, fair and free,
Looked back and waved their hands to me.

I did not cry "Too late! too late!"
Or strive to rise, or rail at Fate,
Or pray to God. My coward heart,
Contented, played its foolish part.

So still I sat, the tireless bee
Sped o'er my head, with scorn for me,
And birds who built their nests in air
Beheld me, as I were not there.

From twig to twig, before my face,
The spiders wove their curious lace,
As they a curtain fine would see
Between the hindering bars and me.

Then, sudden change! I heard the call
Of wind and wave and waterfall;
From heaven above and earth below
A clear command—*"Arise and go!"*

I upward sprang in all my strength,
And stretched my eager hands at length
To break the bars—no bars were there;
My fingers fell through empty air!

ILLUSIONS

DEAR things, I watch you flying
  Far off across the sea;
You are not dead or dying,
  You simply died to me.
But still in life's December,
  My heart leaps up and sings,
For I with joy remember
  The coloring of your wings.

REMEMBERED MIRTH

YOU, you, our friend, who were so kind and gay,
Who, if we wept, could laugh our tears away,
Do you still smile? Enwrapt by heaven's content,
Does aught remain of earth's old merriment?
Forgive me, Dear, though many years have sped,
I laugh to-day, remembering things you said.

A GLEAM OF CRIMSON

Her dress on that day was of a most noble color, a subdued and goodly crimson, girdled and adorned in such sort as best suited with her tender age.
DANTE'S *Vita Nuova.*

WHERE old Florence sits majestic,
  With her treasures round her spread,
Whispering to herself, and asking
  Endless honor for her dead;
There, within the halls of silence
  Kept for memories and for dreams,
Lo! a hue of softest crimson
  Through the shadow always gleams.

Ah, that festa by the Arno!
  Neighbors gathering, young and gay,
Singing, dancing, speaking praises
  Of their lovely Tuscan May;
And, among them, Beatrice,
  Gentle, serious, in her place;
Guessing not her future story,
  Nor the sweetness of her face.

Unremembered are her features;
  All the eyes with joy aglow
On that fateful eve in Florence,
  Darkened, centuries ago;
But forever, clothed in crimson,
  Must a little phantom dance,
And a color, rare and fadeless,
  Glow in Dante's sad romance.

COURTESY

I THINK we should arise and go.
  A thousand guests, and more,
Are pressing at the outer gates,
  Or knocking at the door.

They need the little space we take—
  How gay and strong they seem!
Though we are drowsing more and more,
  Their eyes are stars agleam.

We'll say good-bye and leave them now—
  We thank our gracious hosts;
But larger homes begin to call
  From all the upper coasts.

PAIN

I KNOW not why I came,
  Nor why I stay so long;
No creature loves my name,
  None praise me in their song.

On all my lonesome way,
  Men look at me and frown;
And, be it night or day,
  They drop their curtains down.

There 's no one on the earth
  Who bids me come and stay;
They think I check the mirth,
  And spoil the pleasant play.

Yet in my hand is writ
  A sign I do not know;
I pause to ponder it,
  Whichever way I go.

It glimmers like a star,
  It whispers like a rune;
My Own—whoe'er you are,
  Dismiss me not too soon!

ROOM

WE ask for room where a hope can grow,
  A dear old hope that has tried to live;
A place where its starving roots may go,
  And secret springs their moisture give.
Room! room for a hope that cannot pass,
  That drinks the lightest dews that spill
From broken boughs and withered grass,
  And clings to life with desperate will.

SINCERITY

COME out into the open
  And say the thing you mean;
Let honest words be spoken
  Our sacred souls between;
The truth again may win you,
  Your fingers take the prize;
The spark of God within you
  Leap outward from your eyes.

A GREAT MAN

KING of himself, he seeks not earth's renown,
  But patient wends to meet his daily tasks;
Bows not his head for laurel-wreath or crown;
  An honest wage is all he craves or asks.

Yet is he greater than himself has dreamed,
  And men who pass him check their hurried pace;
So clear a light from his dear eyes has gleamed,
  It dims the glare on street and market-place.

JOY

MY name is Joy! Come out and hear me sing,
  Unfurl your flags to-day,
And question not, nor ask for anything
  That makes an hour's delay.

For ah! Beloved, by chariot swift as mine
  No human feet may run;
I fling you flowers and gems of rare design,
  And tidings from the sun!

OUT OF THE DUSK

SUDDENLY, out of the dusk,
And odor of myrrh and musk,
Looked Yesterday, old and wise,
With love in its faded eyes.

Then all my heart's red blood
Leapt in tumultuous flood.
And I cried to the phantom : "Go,
Lie down in your shroud of snow.

"You are one with the worn-out moon,
But I, in the blaze of noon,
In the noise and the dust of strife,
Must deal with the things of life.

"And my days, they go all ways,
Past the doors of blame and praise,
And whatever I keep or lack,
I never may turn me back.

"You were only a link in a chain,
A blade of the grass of the plain,
The ash where the incense burned,
A page that I wrote and turned.

"Dear shadow, abide in peace
And wait for the years to cease,
And patiently watch and see
What the Lord will do with me."

Then Yesterday, old and wise,
With love in its faded eyes,
Waved long farewell, and passed
Into the silence vast.

MY ROSE

My Rose! My Rose! I loved you so;
With tireless eyes I watched you grow;
From fields afar your roots were brought,
Your life was all my own, I thought.

I proudly saw your leaves unfold,
No King might buy you with his gold;
So sweet you were, so wondrous fair,
No Queen should bind you in her hair.

When Northern winds were loud and chill,
And frosts were whitening vale and hill,
I said, "Not any blast that blows
Shall play too roughly with my Rose."

If suns above you fiercely beat,
I screened you from their glare and heat,
And prayed that only gentlest dew
And softest rain might water you.

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On shining slope, in shaded grot,
Were countless blooms, I saw them not,
Nor missed I them in any wise,
Though dead they lay before my eyes.

One day, just when the Sun was low,
The patient gardener, walking slow,
Paused by my Rose-tree for a while,
Then looked at me with curious smile.

I scarcely dared to lift my eyes,
I knew he was both kind and wise,
And all too plain my heart could guess
His gaze had pierced my selfishness.

He spoke no word of praise or blame;
Just smiled on me and named my name,
And raised his hand as if to bless;
Then left me there in loneliness.

Next morn, in distant garden close,
Deep-rooted, radiant, grew my Rose;
I looked at it through palings tall,
My Rose that missed me not at all!

How fair it was! I grew content,
So plain the thing the gardener meant;
In days or centuries yet to be,
The Rose would be returned to me!

And now I notice, when I pass,
The golden sheen on grain and grass,
And kin to me in all their needs
Are common flowers and wayside weeds.

RECOGNITION

O NATURE, my Mother, how thoughtless
and careless
Was I of thy love in the times that are
past;
But awake, and aware of thy wonderful
kindness,
I lean my tired head on thy bosom at last.

Thy rivers went singing between their green
borders,
But all their low music was nothing to me;
My life was so young, I was taking my
orders,
My fancies went swifter than waves to the
sea.

The peaks of the mountains were pleading
for notice;
The stars were my friends, and they
called from the sky;

The winds at my windows were knocking
like fingers;—
O where was my heart that it could not
reply?

Close hast thou come to me, Merciful
Mother,
Bidding me rest in thy beauty and calm;
Taking my part, and, as something akin to
me,
Healing my hurts with beneficent balm.

Nature, thou kind one, I love thee and
praise thee;
In sunshine or shadow, in silence or
sound,
I creep to thy arms. Like an Indian hunter,
I list for thy voice with my ear to the
ground.

THE LAST DAYS

AH, Dearest, these are the last, last days,
  Their moments swiftly run;
The hills are lost in purple haze,
  We scarce can see the sun;
With drooping wings, through endless space,
  Our old illusions flee,
And silence comes, with sacred face,
  And stares at you and me.

Ah, Love, my Love, in last, last days,
  How sweet the roses seem;
While yet a little light delays,
  Back comes the morning dream.
In tents of peace, with perfect trust
  That youth may never know,
Though half our idols lie in dust,
  How fond the heart can grow!

HOW WILT THOU GO?

WHEN all thy days are done, and Life's great
door,
Which let thee in, shall open wide once more
To let thee out; thou wanderer to and fro,
With what equipment wilt thou rise and go?
Wilt say farewell to earth with whimpering
cries,
And clinging hands, and backward-turning
eyes?
Or wilt thou pass as pleased as any child
That fears no evil though the night is wild,
But singing goes across the darkened halls,
With swift obedience when his father calls?

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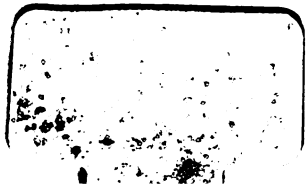
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